

**The Parables**  
**Matthew 21:33-46**  
**(Parable of The Vineyard)**  
**“Will You Be Broken or Crushed”**

**Introduction**

It was the week of Passover. Jesus knew that his time was at hand and that He would soon be handed over to the religious leaders of Israel to be crucified. He had many different confrontations with the Pharisees that week and had stood his ground. Try as they might, they were unable to find any fault in Him. He was the Spotless Lamb of God come to take away the sins of the world (**John 1:29**). He repeatedly warned them that they would find themselves on the wrong side of God's righteous judgment if they failed to recognize Him, but they were blind and did not heed his warnings. He had likened them to a dishonest son, who had promised to work for his father, but in the end had refused to do so (**Matthew 21:28-32**). He proceeded to give them yet another example (parable) of just how evil they had become in the sight of heaven. They had taken all that God had given them and used it for their own personal gain, giving no regard to God's glory. Israel had been set apart by God Himself to be a source of “fruit” for the nations, but sin had corrupted the nation and no good fruit was being produced. Time and again they had been warned, but they never heeded the warnings. The Pharisees were a perfect example of Israel's corruption. They could not have cared less for the people that they had been called to shepherd. Rather, they had only the desire to exalt themselves, both financially, as well as, in their covetousness for the admiration of men. They were boastful and proud of their piety and went to great lengths to separate themselves from those they had deemed “undesirable”. In short, they were the complete antithesis of Christ and all that He stood for.

The Parable of The Vineyard is a story of the depravity of Israel. I find it interesting in our culture today that no one ever takes responsibility for their own actions. There is always some excuse brought to bear when people are confronted with their sin. “It's not my fault. It was the environment that I was brought up in.” is the often quoted excuse phrase of the day. When we stand before God, however, there will be no excuses. Every one will be confronted with their earthly deeds and will give an account for all that they have done. They will also be accountable for what they have done with The Son of God. The final result will either be heaven or hell. What we do with the truths that we have been given will be entirely up to us. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to know that God had done everything possible for them to see His truth. He had provided perfectly for the nation of Israel, and yet, she had rebelled against Him. The nation's failure both to recognize and revere the Son of God would be the final straw of her rebellion. They had summarily rejected God time and again, and soon they were to crucify their only hope of redemption. They were in the gravest of danger, and yet, still would not heed the warnings to repent. The Pharisees were about to plunge headlong into everlasting darkness.

The story begins with a wealthy landowner (God), who planted a vineyard (Israel) and provided everything that it would need to be fruitful. He built a wall of protection around it. He dug a winepress for the grapes, and He even built a watchtower in its midst so that the tenants could be ever watchful against the enemies that might come to steal the harvest. God had chosen Israel as his very own. He had protected them and given them His Word and the priest to teach it, so that the tiny nation could be safe from the enemy (Satan). He had destined them to be able to produce a good fruit that could be dispersed throughout the nations (winepress), but sadly, no “wine” had ever been produced that their neighbors could drink. Instead of being set apart as an example to their neighbors, Israel had sinned along with their neighbors. It is impossible to lead the lost to repentance, if you act the same as they do. This fact has never and will never change. It is also the reason that The Church in America has become largely ineffective in her attempts to make disciples. Sadly, instead of being a shining example, we are becoming as worldly as the world. God help us! There are three things that I would like for us to observe this morning in the Parable of The Vineyard: The RENTAL AGREEMENT, The REBELLION, and The ROCK.

### **The Rental Agreement**

Jesus makes it perfectly clear that Israel (the vineyard) was the sole property of God The Father. It was God, and God alone, that had called Abraham from the pagan city of Ur and promised to make him a great nation (**Genesis 12:1-3**). That nation was established as God's vineyard. Not only had He founded the nation, but He had given them His protection. He established a government to rule them, and gave them His Law to live by, so they might produce fruit (these are symbolized by the hedge, watchtower and winepress). His sole desire was to bless His people, so long as they lived according to His statutes. It is the ONLY nation on earth that has God's promise to endure. God made a covenant with King David that his throne would be established forever (**2 Samuel 7:16**). Jesus, who is descended from David's line, WILL in fact reestablish David's throne over an everlasting kingdom. It will be called The Kingdom of God. For a period of time, the Gentiles will have their way upon the earth, but when that day comes to and end, then all Israel will be saved, and this everlasting kingdom will begin (**Romans 11:25-26**). It is for this very reason that the Jewish people have endured hardship and persecution for millennia. God still has a plan for His vineyard. However, the religious elitists of Jesus' day were corrupt and ripe for God's judgment. They had been given the opportunity to be "stewards" of the vineyard, and yet, they had forgotten to honor the owner!

Jesus perfectly illustrated for the Pharisees just how God had felt about their wicked stewardship. The nation of Israel had no excuses for their disobedience to God, for He had done everything that He could possibly have done to ensure their success. The rental agreement had been simple enough to understand. God provided everything that was necessary of Israel to be "fruitful". The sum total of all expenses had been borne by Him personally. He had merely entrusted the elders and religious leaders with the responsibility of tending the vineyard. Instead of doing just that in order to bring glory to God, the leaders of Israel had used the nation as their own means of prosperity. They had used the vineyard's resources to line their own pockets as it were. They had, in fact, broken the lease covenant and were trying to make themselves rich at the expense of God's people. Time and again God sent prophets to warn them, but they would not hear them. They had forgotten the rightful owner of the vineyard. By acting in their own selfish interest, they had broken the rental agreement.

### **The Rebellion**

Throughout the ages, God sent prophets to warn Israel of His coming judgment. Those Prophets were treated with contempt. They were despised by the leaders of Israel and many were shunned, while others were executed. Jewish tradition claims that the prophet Isaiah was sawed in half by the wicked King Manasseh (**Hebrews 11:37**). Many other prophets were stoned, and John The Baptist was beheaded. The leaders of Israel did not have a great track record when it came to the treatment of God's messengers. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of this fact in His story, comparing the laundry list of mistreated prophets of God to messengers sent by the owner of the vineyard to collect what was due him (**vs. 34-36**). Though many repeated attempts had been made to restore the nation to holiness, the result was always the same. The messengers were despised for their efforts and were shamefully treated.

Finally, the owner of the vineyard decides to send his son to talk to the stewards. **"Surely", he thought, "They will reverence my son."** (**vs.37**). It is here that Jesus foretells of His own death at the hands of the wicked stewards of Israel. For just as the prophets that God had sent before Him, The Son of God would also be despised and rejected of men. But little did they know that by His wounds many others would find healing by simply believing upon His name (**Isaiah 53:3-5**). Sadly, they would have been able to see this had they only listened to the prophets that God had sent to them. But they were so bent on having their own way, they had refused to listen. How ironic that the very same "Son" that Isaiah had foretold (and was killed for the telling) was the very Son that stood before them that day and was soon to be slain as well. The "renters" had no regard for the Son, just as they had no regard for those who told of His coming. They were, and had long been, in complete rebellion against the owner of the vineyard. As they listened to Jesus' powerful illustration, the fact that they could not see the error of their unbelief is inexplicable.

Jesus asked the Pharisees what the owner would do to those wicked servants, to which they replied, **"He will bring those wretched servants to a wretched end."** (**vs. 40-41**). They were so caught up in the story itself, that they did not realize that they were pronouncing judgment upon

themselves! I am reminded here of the prophet Nathan, who confronted King David for his sin with Bathsheba by telling a parable about a rich man who had wickedly stolen and slaughtered his neighbors pet lamb to feed his dinner guest. David had called for the man's execution, until the Prophet Nathan had pointed his bony finger at David and said **"You ARE that man!" (2 Samuel 12:1-7)**. Isn't it amazing how hard we judge the sins of others, all the while excusing our own? The Pharisees had gotten the point, but had missed it at the same time. THEY were the wretched servants in the parable! THEY were in rebellion against the owner of the vineyard.

### **The Rock**

I absolutely LOVE what Jesus did next. He asked the Pharisees if they had ever read **Psalm 118**. He even quoted a portion of it to them. **"The Stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; The LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes." (Psalm 118:22-23)**. Of COURSE, they had read that Psalm. Psalm 118 was the final song of what is called "The Egyptian Hallel" (Egyptian praise, **Psalms 113-118**). The song was sung at the close of EVERY single Passover to commemorate the exodus from Egypt. In fact, a portion of it was quoted by the cheering crowds as Jesus had entered the city at the first of the week: **"Hosannah (save now), Blessed is He who comes in the name of The LORD (Psalm 118:25-26)"**. EVERYONE in all of Israel had read Psalm 118, and during this particular week, it was on the lips of every soul within the city of Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples even sang it at the end of their passover meal. It is the "hymn" that Matthew references just before they leave to head out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus was arrested (**Matthew 26:30**).

Although the Pharisees prided themselves upon knowing the scriptures, they had no earthly idea, as to what the words of this song truly meant. The stone that the builders rejected was none other than Christ Himself. Their rejection of Him didn't stop Him from becoming just what God had always planned for Him to become. He is the foundation of The Church. The Pharisees refused to accept Him, and therefore, the kingdom would be taken from them and given to The Church (**vs.43**)! There can be no kingdom without it's chief cornerstone. Jesus is the one necessary Rock, that the house of God must be built upon. To reject Christ is to try and build the house of God with no foundation. Without Christ, nothing will be able to stand in the presence of God, but the house built upon the rock will forever endure (**Matthew 7:24-27; 16:18; 1 Peter 2:4-5**). Jesus is the Stone that the builders (Jewish leaders) had rejected, and they couldn't even see it.

I truly believe that there are many people sitting in the pews of our churches today, who hear the Bible and sing the songs of faith, and yet fail to grasp their true meaning. Jesus told the Pharisees that **everyone who falls upon The Stone will be broken, but everyone on whom The Stone falls will be crushed**. Many Bible scholars have debated the meaning of this statement. Some say it simply means that everyone who denies Christ will be broken and crushed. I, however, agree with others who believe that this is a two-part statement. Everyone who falls upon Christ, recognizing Him for who He really is, will become broken. They will see themselves for the sinners that they truly are and will beg for mercy and forgiveness. Without brokenness, there can be no true salvation (**Matthew 5:3**). To be broken upon the Chief Corner Stone is the only way we can ever be made right with God. Has there been a time in your life when you truly met Christ face to face and were broken by your sin? If not, then why not meet Him today? He is standing at the door of your heart waiting to come in (**Revelation 3:20**). Why not open the door and see Him for Who He truly is? When you do, you will see yourself as you truly are and be broken. Cry out to the Chief Cornerstone and be forgiven. To fall upon Him is to never be the same again. Everything that once mattered will be forgotten in the light of His glory and grace.

The second part of the statement is meant for those who reject Him. Those who refuse to fall upon Christ and be broken, will one day be crushed when His judgement falls upon them. When that happens, it will be too late. Jesus is coming soon. The Pharisees finally realized when He made this statement that He was talking about them, and they wanted to kill Him, but they feared the crowd (**vs. 45-46**). Many people today would love to be able to "silence" Jesus, but that will never happen. His Word endures forever (**1 Peter 1:24-25**). Even though the Pharisees did indeed manage to have Him crucified that very week, His message has been resounding throughout the earth for some two thousand years. Try as you might, you can't shake Jesus. He is The Alpha and The Omega, The First and The Last, The Beginning and The End (**Revelation 22:13-14**). Those who fall upon Him will be broken and will find

forgiveness, but those on whom He falls will be crushed. Which of those are you this morning? Has there been a time when you fell upon The Rock? Have you surrendered your life to Him? Are you following Him daily and living according to His Word? Are you bearing fruit for the Owner of the vineyard? Or have you just been taking what He has given to live for your own selfish pleasures? Where do you stand this morning? Are you standing upon The Rock or will you one day look up to see The Rock coming down upon you? Make the right choice. Or as the old hymn used to say:

“On Christ The Solid Rock I stand  
All other ground is sinking sand  
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Fall upon Christ and receive the forgiveness that is waiting for you. Whatever you have done and wherever you have been, The Rock has the power to make you new.

And ALL of God's people said... TRUTH!!!